

SAN FRANCISCO MEETING

Abstract of the proceedings of the supplementary sessions of the National Conference of Jewish Social Service held on Wednesday, June 26th, the opening day of the National Conference of Social Work, at the Temple House of Congregation Emanu-El, San Francisco, California.

GENERAL SESSION

WEDNESDAY MORNING, JUNE 26, 1929

Mr. Manuel P. Ostrow, Executive Director, Eureka Benevolent Society, San Francisco, presiding.

Judge M. C. Sloss welcomed the delegates in the name of the Jewish Community of San Francisco.

Dr. Samuel C. Kohs gave a résumé of the proceedings of the Conference sessions held in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on June 2-5, 1929.

A detailed statement of the aims and purposes of the National Appeals Information Service was presented by William J. Shroder.

In the discussion that followed and which was largely concerned with the question of adapting the fund-raising machinery of local Federations for the collection of funds for national and international purposes, Mr. Harry J. Sapper gave an exposition of the form of organization and method of operation of the Oakland, California, United Jewish Welfare Fund.

LUNCHEON MEETING

The luncheon tendered to the Conference delegates by the Jewish Community of San Francisco was presided over by Mr. Edgar Sinton, San Francisco.

Dr. Solomon Lowenstein spoke of the need for organizing Federation Boards for the study of general community problems and programs. The New York City Federation is organizing a series of one-day conferences to be attended by the representatives of the Boards and the professional staffs of the agencies affiliated with it. Leading experts from all over the country are invited to participate in these conferences.

Dr. Lowenstein also spoke of the widening scope of local Federations and the services of such national agencies as the Bureau of Jewish Social Research and its Field Service Department, and the National Appeals Information Service which are helping the local communities to deal with local and extra-local problems in a more thorough and comprehensive manner.

Mr. Samuel A. Goldsmith spoke of the urgent need for a searching inquiry into the nature and extent of the integration of the Jewish community in the general community. Jewish communal workers are becoming increasingly aware of the decreasing pressure of the special problems which absorbed their attention during the period of Jewish mass immigration to

the United States. There are certain manifestations of a process of Jewish adjustment to the economic, social and political life of the country. But we do not know today in an exact way how rapid and how thorough these adjustments are made; still less do we know where to and how far these are leading us. The Jewish community, aside from having organized an almost complete system of social service paralleling that of the general community, is becoming more aggressively interested in enriching its life through cultural and educational activities. The Jewish community is manifestly intent upon maintaining its own identity. The problem of what the Jewish community has to contribute to America, and what America has to contribute to the Jewish community has not been probed. This is the pressing task before Jewish communal leaders.

Dr. Boris D. Bogen commented on the need for individualizing the problems of the various groups and elements that make up the Jewish community. Communal workers in their anxiety to coordinate and unify the social forces operating in the community are apt to lose sight of the potency of varying interests in bringing about general progress. A study of elements common to all Jewish communities as well as of their differences is essential to a thorough understanding of Jewish life in this country.

AFTERNOON SESSIONS

GROUP DISCUSSION I

CHILD CARE PROBLEMS IN JEWISH INSTITUTIONS

Chairman: Dr. Samuel Langer, San Francisco, California.

The use and development of "measuring sticks" for child care institutions was, at the suggestion of the Chairman, first taken up for discussion.

Chairman Langer, introducing the subject, said that the "measuring sticks" proposed by the American Association for Community Organization are, in his opinion, not entirely satisfactory as they represent averages rather than norms. They are furthermore mechanical in character and not flexible enough to make allowance for such factors as the transitory character of the community, its specific economic and social composition, and similar factors.

Dr. Solomon Lowenstein (New York, N. Y.) said that in any discussion of standards account should be taken of the fact that Jewish child care institutions have specific problems to deal with and that they are markedly differentiated from those of other sectarian groups. The differentiation is not only in the social, educational and religious programs of Jewish institutions, but also in the type of problems they have to deal with. In New York City, for instance, a number of factors have been causative of changes in the size and character of the population of the Jewish child care institutions. The number of children cared for in institutions and boarding-out homes has not increased in proportion to the growth of the Jewish population of the city. Many of the children now cared for in the New York institutions are socially, economically and mentally of a lower grade than was the case only ten years back. Jewish institutions find themselves with

an increasingly greater number of problem cases on hand. This, of course, necessitates a change in the method of treatment and in the general child care program of the community.

Mrs. L. Edward Lashman (New Orleans, La.) stated that the New Orleans institution draws its population from seven southern states besides Louisiana. There is a great pressure from the surrounding states for admitting children to the institution. Very little placement is done. There has been in recent years no material change in either the size or the character of the child care population. Psychiatric service and child care clinics are, however, as necessary for the normal child as for the presumably deteriorated child. This the New Orleans community is now trying to develop.

Mr. Joseph Bonapart (Vista Del Mar, Los Angeles, Cal.) was of the opinion that, taking the situation in other parts of the country, the change in child care methods is possibly due not so much to a change in the character of the child population as to the change in emphasis on the mental aspects of the work.

Mr. A. Osovsky (Winnipeg, Canada) pointed out that the difference in the character of the institutional child population of New York City and other parts of the country and particularly in Canada is to be sought for in the type of homes the children come from. The Winnipeg institution draws its population from small communities in the western provinces of Canada. Economic conditions in these small towns and villages are better than in the larger cities. The children thus come from homes with a higher standard of living, with a certain family background, with certain traditions and education. This type of children is superior to those coming from the city slums, products of poverty with no educational, religious and national background.

Dr. Lowenstein stressed the need for developing in each community the type of child care program that will enable it to take advantage of every kind of method for the care of children and to adapt the care to the needs of the individual child. This is possible in the larger as well as in the smaller communities. Pressure is brought to bear upon all local institutions. But for a community to limit its child care program to institutional care only is merely to badly handicap itself in its best service to the children.

The need of case workers in child care institutions was next raised by Miss Cecile Epstein (Chicago).

Mr. Bonapart (Los Angeles) stated that the California State Welfare Department requires that every institution must have a case worker for every hundred children. Those having less than one hundred children must use the services of a part time worker. The Jewish institutions in California have anticipated this by many years, and the number of case workers is much better than one to a hundred.

GROUP DISCUSSION II

PROBLEMS OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

Chairman: I. Irving Lipsitch, Los Angeles, California.

The question of the functions of the Federation executive in relation to the problem of community integration was introduced by the Chairman as the topic for group discussion.

The function of the Federation executive, he said, should be not only to marshal available resources toward meeting the community's needs and

problems, but also to endeavor to bring about its integration, to create out of an aggregate of individuals an integrated, conscious whole. This applies particularly to relatively new communities where no community consciousness has been built up. In Los Angeles, for instance, nearly 75 per cent of the local population has come to live there within the last ten years. The integration should further proceed along the lines of getting all elements of the population to take an active interest in coordinated communal efforts and participate in its leadership. Not least among present community organization problems is the training of the younger generation for community leadership.

Mr. S. L. Mosbacher (Oakland, Cal.) stated that while Oakland has been gaining in Jewish population, many of the older leaders have been leaving the town and that the new comers are as yet too engrossed in getting a start to qualify for leadership. Oakland is, however, always in search of new material and has been fairly successful in drawing in some of the younger men in communal work.

Mr. Harry J. Sapper (Oakland, Cal.) expressed the opinion that the question of community organization must be approached from the angle of the direction which the Federation is to follow. What purpose is there in Jewish community organization, and if there is such a purpose, how is it to be realized? We must determine what, precisely, is the function of a Federation in a community. Should it be the leader in all matters of Jewish import or should it merely limit itself to the task of securing aid from one element of the community for the other element that is in need of it?

Mr. Lipsitch: The business of the Federation is two-fold: One is to be interested in everything that is Jewish, philanthropic, cultural, social, even, in some ways, religious. The other is to be interested in everything that is of social import in the general community. The Federation, in other words, is to act as the representative of the Jewish population in all matters that affect the general welfare of the community.

Mr. Rabinowitz (San Francisco, Cal.): Jewish life is broader than its merely religious manifestations. It has two aspects, religious and racial. There is a need for two types of leadership, religious and lay. The lay leadership must be broad in scope to include the inter-relation between the various elements in the community and what might be called the intra-Jewish problems, and the relation of the Jewish to the general community. This leadership cannot be found among the general laity. They are too preoccupied with their own affairs and, in most instances, lack breadth of vision to make them acceptable as spokesmen for the entire community. The lay leader must be a man whose whole business, whose whole training fits him for the lay affairs of the Jewish community. Our communities are not integrated, of course. But the process of integration is a long and difficult one. In the absence of complete integration, we may start with the Federation, which represents the bulk of the important elements of the community, and have its leader carry on the work of representation and ultimate integration.

Mr. Ben Sheinman (Los Angeles, Cal.) thought that the key to the situation is integration. Until we get true integration the community would not be ready to accept such a lay leader. The means of integrating the various elements, aside from the Federation, and the integrating of the Federation and organizations outside of it are the problems that should be given proper consideration.